

Message Text

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46

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 AID-20 IGA-02 AGR-20 EB-11 IO-14

RSC-01 COME-00 TRSE-00 SWF-02 PC-10 INT-08 SCI-06

FDRE-00 OMB-01 SCSE-00 SCA-01 FEA-02 FPC-01 HEW-08

MED-03 DOTE-00 SPM-01 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /248 W
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R 021135Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4721

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EGEN, ENRG, EIND, ETRN, EAGR, ETRD

SUBJECT: EFFECTS OF DROUGHT ON THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

REF YAOUNDE 1220 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF SEVERAL YEARS OF REDUCED RAINFALL HAS HAD MEASURABLE EFFECTS ON THE CAR'S ECONOMIC LIFE. TRANSPORTATION, ELECTRIC POWER, AND INDUSTRY AS WELL AS HEALTH OF SOME OF THE RURAL POPULATION HAVE BEEN ADVERSELY AFFECTED.

1. DURING THE LAST FOUR YEARS RAINFALL IN THE CAR HAS BEEN ON THE AVERAGE 25 PER CENT OR MORE BELOW NORMAL, CAUSING RIVER LEVELS UNCLASSIFIED

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TO DROP AND WELLS TO DRY UP. THE WATER TABLE IS SO LOW THAT SOME

TRIBUTARIES OF THE CAR'S MAJOR RIVERS ARE DRY.

2. HYDROELECTRIC POWER SUPPLIED TO BANGUI FROM BOALI FALLS HAS DIMINISHED. FLOW OVER FALLS HAS DWINDLED TO POINT THAT ENERCA, THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED POWER COMPANY, HAS BEEN FORCED TO REDUCE POWER TO ITS INDUSTRIAL CUSTOMERS BY 50 PER CENT. AS A RESULT SOME COMPANIES, INCLUDING THE TEXTILE COMPANY (ICCA) THE BEER AND SODA COMPANY (MOCAF), HAVE EXPERIENCED PRODUCTION LOSSES AND FOOD SPOILAGE AND HAVE FURLOUGHED WORKERS, ENERCA ESTIMATES PRODUCTION LOSSES AND FOOD SPOILAGE EXPERIENCED BY LOCAL CONCERNS TO EQUAL \$3.3 MILLION SO FAR THIS YEAR. IN ADDITION THE POWER CUTBACKS HAVE COST ENERCA \$1 MILLION PER MONTH SINCE JANUARY.

3. THE OUBANGUI RIVER, THE CAR'S MAJOR TRADE ROUTE, HAS BEEN SO LOW THAT DURING 1974 THERE WERE 73 DAYS IN WHICH THE RIVER WAS NOT NAVIGABLE. BY CONTRAST THERE WERE NO DAYS IN 1970 AND 1971 IN WHICH THE RIVER WAS NOT NAVIGABLE. IN 1972 THERE WERE 46 DAYS AND IN 1973 THERE WERE 48 DAYS IN WHICH THE RIVER WAS NOT NAVIGABLE. THE CAR HAS EXPERIENCED SHORTAGES OF IMPORTED GOODS BECAUSE OF THE UNUSUALLY SHORT SHIPPING SEASON.

4. THE DROUGHT HAS ALSO AFFECTED CERTAIN AGRICULTURAL CROPS. THE PEANUT CROP, THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT FOOD CROP AFTER MANIOC, HAS DROPPED FROM 75,000 METRIC TONS IN 69/70 TO 40,600 IN 71/72, PARTLY BECAUSE OF WATER SHORTAGES. THERE HAVE BEEN DELAYS IN PLANTING THIS YEAR'S CROP IN THE NORTH FOR THE SAME REASON. THE DRYING UP OF STREAMS HAS ALSO AFFECTED CATTLE RAISING. CATTLE MUST NOW GRAZE NEARER TO MAJOR RIVERS AND THOSE AREAS ARE NOW SUBJECT TO OVERGRAZING.

5. THE DROUGHT HAS UNFORTUNATE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE AVERAGE CENTRAL AFRICAN SUBSISTENCE FARMER IN THE NORTH AS WELL. ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT STARVING, MISSIONARIES REPORT THAT MORE PEOPLE THERE ARE CONTRACTING SCHISTOSOMIASIS AND AMOEBIC DYSENTERY AS PEOPLE BECOME DEPENDENT ON STAGNANT POOLS FOR WATER. THE WATER TABLE IS SO LOW THAT SOME PEOPLE ARE GOING TO WELLS AT MIDNIGHT OR ARE TRAVELING MUCH GREATER DISTANCE TO FIND WATER. MANY WELLS NEED TO BE REDUG.

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6. COMMENT: DIRECT CONSEQUENCES OF REDUCED RAINFALL OVER LAST SEVERAL YEARS ARE SO FAR VISIBLE IN FIELD OF TRANSPORT AND POWER OVER THE WHOLE COUNTRY AND WATER SUPPLY FOR PEOPLE AND CATTLE IN THE NORTH. AGRICULTURAL CONSEQUENCES ARE NOT YET SIGNIFICANT AND MUCH WILL DEPEND ON THE SPRING RAINS. WE WILL KEEP INTERESTED USG OFFICES INFORMED AS ADDITIONAL INFO BECOMES AVAILABLE. DETAILED AIRGRAM WILL FOLLOW. DALE

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